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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 KABUL 000184

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR SCA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A, S/CRS, SA/PB, S/CT,
EUR/RPM
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN
OSD FOR KIMMITT
CENTCOM FOR CFC-A, CG CJTF-76, POLAD, JICCENT

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [MARR](#) [AF](#) [IR](#) [PK](#) [ECON](#)

SUBJECT: A/S BOUCHER MEETING WITH AFGHAN NSA RASSOUL

REF: KABUL 0115

Classified By: A/DCM Sara Rosenberry for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

SUMMARY

11. (C) During a January 9 meeting between Assistant Secretary Boucher and Afghan National Security Advisor

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Rassoul, Rassoul offered a comprehensive look at the security situation in Afghanistan, and the two shared concerns over the situation in Musa Qala and poppy cultivation. Boucher said the U.S. had doubts about the effectiveness of mining and fencing the border and urged that the issue be taken up in the military tripartite talks. On jirgas, Rassoul was hopeful that once the Commissions were in regular contact there would be progress on preparations. Rassoul said Karzai recently warned Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki that the Taliban could return if the West left Afghanistan and advised Iran to choose which it preferred. Boucher briefed on U.S. funding for Afghanistan. He explained the new Joint Coordinating and Monitoring Board "Contact Group" concept, underlining the U.S. expects Afghanistan to drive discussions at the upcoming meeting in Berlin on January 30. U.S. goals are to raise the profile of civilian work in capitals and direct money where it is needed most on the ground. END
SUMMARY

Musa Qala

12. (C) Afghan National Security Advisor Rassoul used their January 9 meeting to brief Boucher on latest developments in Musa Qala. He noted that the Policy Action Group had decided to test the agreement by the end of January but was concerned that the UK was not keen on a timetable for the critical third test (presence of government security forces from outside the district stationed there). This is "worrisome," he said, and commented that most Afghans were concerned about

the situation there.

¶3. (C) Rassoul reported that former Helmand Governor Daud was at the Hajj and would be appointed someplace "less troublesome." Daud had been in trouble in Helmand as there were many who were opposed to him. Daud wants to be near Kabul, so he'll likely be appointed somewhere near the capital. The new Governor, Wafa, is much better with the tribes, so is more suitable for Helmand, Rassoul explained.

¶4. (C) Boucher asked why Helmand is so different from other provinces. Rassoul believes it is because of the dominance of poppy and the convergence of Al-Qaeda, Taliban, and drugs in one place. Tribal elders were neglected under Daud, so he paid a price. The Taliban have taken advantage of the situation. Rassoul said that when the UK first went into Helmand, they were willing to conduct military operations but found that they never had enough Afghan National Security Forces to fill in behind once an area had been cleared out. All these factors have contributed to the present difficulties, said Rassoul.

¶5. (C) Rassoul predicted that the situation in the East would improve this year) Kunar, Nuristan and Paktika in particular. He expressed concern over Waziristan where he said many have left to conduct suicide bombings in Afghanistan. The rest of Afghanistan was "Okay", although suffering from the usual post-conflict security problems.

Security Sector Reform

¶6. (C) Rassoul reported that the Afghan National Army was doing well and had performed commendably in battle. The Afghan Government has requested better equipment from the

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United States, which will soon be arriving. The speed of training was much better now, Rassoul commented, which has led to greater confidence in the ranks.

¶7. (C) Rassoul contrasted this with the Afghan National Police which still faces lots of problems. On the plus side, district-level police were ready to be approved and the agreed list was waiting Presidential signature. Some Chiefs of Police have been removed who were not doing well (the infamous 14 - reftel), he reported. The result is that a structure is now in place and ready to absorb money and assistance from the U.S. The Policy Action Group will continue to monitor developments. Rassoul said that vetting and training had slowed down, but is now up and running again.

Judicial Reform and Anti-Corruption Efforts

¶8. (C) Rassoul assessed that judicial reform was progressing well, with the help of the Italians. Rassoul highlighted the strong support that Sabit was receiving from Karzai, adding that Attorney General Sabit was doing a good job and that people were starting to fear him. Boucher agreed that if average Afghans started to see big people go down, they would believe that Sabit was serious. He noted there is a difference between preventing corruption and cracking down on corruption and asked if sufficient controls were now in place, including appointment vetting procedures. Rassoul replied that this was a top priority for the Government. In the past, the Government was concerned that it risked stability if it went after influential people. Now the Government felt strong enough and is going after them. Rassoul said that the court and judicial systems were also improving daily, so it was all coming together.

Narcotics

¶9. (C) Rassoul described poppy cultivation as the most difficult issue facing the Government. There were no indications of a reduction, except in parts of the north and central regions. Rassoul was concerned that increases in Helmand would compensate for any reductions in the north. The biggest concern remained Helmand. Rassoul said it was important to see a decrease this year.

¶10. (C) Boucher asked if the current strategy was working. Rassoul argued that the strategy was sound but implementation was lacking. He said that we might have to go ahead with ground spraying. Boucher noted that the British would be in Washington January 22-23 for another round of discussions. In December, they had agreed to ground spraying, but not in Helmand. Boucher noted that there was much discussion in London on the issue and that the decision would be made there. Boucher understood the UK's focus on Helmand but hoped that they would begin thinking about the country as a whole. Rassoul agreed and noted the difference between Coalition Forces and NATO. The former looked nationally while NATO countries focused only on their respective provinces.

¶11. (C) Boucher briefed Rassoul on his talks with Turkey and Pakistan last year regarding their experiences with poppy eradication. Their experience indicated that it took 5-10 years to solve the problem. Government determination was a key factor -- speeches, public relations campaigns -- together with arrests and eradication. A third factor was that real alternatives had to be provided, not just alternative livelihood crops, but jobs, industries, and a new rural economic system. Rassoul added that a fourth factor, the Taliban, had to be considered for Afghanistan. The country was at war. Rassoul argued that the Government was showing its determination and now needed to go after more bad guys.

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Pakistan and Jirgas

¶12. (C) Assistant Secretary Boucher recommended that Pakistan's proposal to mine and fence the border be taken up in military channels. He shared that the issue had come up before and that the U.S. had doubts about the effectiveness of the measures. He saw the latest move as a sign that the Pakistanis want to show the world that they are serious about terrorism.

¶13. (C) Rassoul agreed that Pakistan wanted to send a message but also believed that the Pakistanis wanted to physically delineate the Durand Line. He argued that the border was not the problem. It was the sanctuaries, the training camps and the madrassas. These were the main factors, emphasized Rassoul. Mining and fencing will only create more problems. The initiative was "anti-jirga" as jirgas are intended to bring people together while fencing will only separate them. Boucher concurred that it was less a matter of control at the border than it was control behind the border. He said that the U.S. was pushing for political solutions. Boucher explained that Aziz had told him that Pakistan's intentions were to take action against concentrations of Al-Qaeda and Taliban along the border, especially in Waziristan. Pakistan will also be looking at more intel operations as well as more political solutions. Musharraf was determined to make the North Waziristan Agreement work, Boucher said.

¶14. (C) Rassoul stressed the importance of keeping up contacts with Pakistan. Boucher assured Rassoul that the U.S. would be encouraging more dialogue. In the short-term, he suggested we identify steps to now take militarily while we had the winter advantage. "Making the spring offensive our offensive" should be our goal, Boucher said.

¶15. (C) On the jirgas, Rassoul stressed the need to hold them soon. The purpose for the jirgas is to help prepare better for the summer, he said. Boucher asked if in the meetings with Aziz and Kasuri the Afghan side had been able to break the impasse over the difference in approaches. Rassoul responded that it was not possible with Kasuri as he only dealt in generalities. In contrast, with Aziz, Karzai had put everything on the table and the answer was yes, but since Aziz was not a security person, the discussions could only go so far. Boucher said it would be important to have both national support and local decision making, a combination that would make the jirgas work. Rassoul agreed and believed that if the two Commissions get together in a serious way, the process "will get rolling."

Iran

¶16. (C) Rassoul briefed on the recent visit of Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki, characterizing the talks with Karzai as frank. Karzai told him that if Iran worked against the U.S. and NATO in Afghanistan, the Taliban would only take advantage. He challenged Iran to decide who it preferred in Afghanistan -- the Taliban or NATO. Karzai also argued that Iran's policy toward the U.S. was wrong, both for Iran and for the region. He called on Iran to open up and talk to the U.S. Mottaki had been resistant and denied the poor relations with the U.S. were Iran's fault. Mottaki insisted that the U.S. did not want to engage with Iran.

¶17. (C) Rassoul did not think that the Iranian Foreign Ministry was the right channel through which to discuss the Taliban. Iran's intelligence service were the people in touch with the Taliban, Rassoul said. He noted that Iran was putting money in Afghanistan, not only for projects, but also for mullahs and clergy who were directing anti-West propaganda. Rassoul said Afghanistan was watching closely

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for any signs of Sunni-Shia conflicts in the region as this would be most unwelcome.

U.S. Funding/Supplemental Budget

¶18. (C) Assistant Secretary Boucher briefed Rassoul on the upcoming budget request for Afghanistan. He said that additional funding would be announced in President Bush's State of the Union Address, with more details coming out at the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting. There would be billions of dollars for police and equipping the army and additional funds for governance, justice, police, roads, energy, and power lines. Big money was being put on the table for both this year and next, he explained. Boucher said that the expectation is that the money would be available in the summer or early fall.

¶19. (C) Boucher described past successes where military action had been followed by reconstruction and development money. This was done in some areas successfully and now the U.S. wanted to expand this throughout the country, Boucher said. The Europeans also understood this, but their numbers were declining. Boucher said that at the January 26 NATO Foreign Ministers meeting the U.S. would be pushing for an end to caveats. He urged Rassoul to keep the funding issue in front of the Europeans.

New Contact Group

¶20. (C) Boucher explained that the proposal for a new Contact Group was a French proposal. The U.S. proposed a different idea to ensure it is linked to and supports the Joint Coordinating and Monitoring Board, with the Afghan Government driving the process. This will be a useful mechanism for raising the civilian profile in capitals and

ensuring that the money goes where it is needed most, Boucher said. The new name of the group would be the "Joint Coordinating and Monitoring Board Contact Group" and would require the Afghan Government to be the main driver.

¶21. (C) The Assistant Secretary cited as a model the Regional Economic Cooperation meeting in New Delhi where the Afghans drove the event, which made it a huge success. He would encourage the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and President Karzai's Senior Economic Advisor Naderi to take the same approach to the Political Directors' meeting in Berlin. Rassoul agreed with the value of this approach.

¶22. (U) SCA Senior Advisor Caitlin Hayden cleared this cable.

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